

From 'brilliant' to blemished: Corrosion eats into the profits

By Roger Boye

MORE QUESTIONS about coins and collecting are answered in this week's column.

Q — I have several coins that originally were graded "brilliant uncirculated," but after several years, some of them show black spots. Are my rarities worth less now? And how can I protect them in the future? — D.P., Cary.

A — Yes, the value of your keepsakes is reduced. Collectors will always pay more for uncirculated coins that are free of spots, nicks, or other blemishes.

Most coins eventually will tarnish or even corrode. To slow down the natural oxidation process, collectors should place uncirculated coins in hard plastic holders and store them in a dry location free of fumes.

Moisture and dust are especially harmful to copper coins. United States Mint experts say an unprotected proof

Lincoln cent will tarnish in about two weeks.

Q — While checking my husband's coins, I discovered a medal that may have great value. It shows John Tyler, U.S. president from 1841 to 1845. How much is it worth? — P.E., Chicago.

A — In the last 20 years, private mints have produced several types of medals honoring each of the presidents. Relatively few people collect such pieces, so most are worth only the value of their metal content. If your medal is made of aluminum or bronze, it would retail for less than a quarter.

THE OAK PARK Coin Club will conduct its annual open house meeting from 2 to 5 p.m. next Sunday at the Longfellow Recreation Center, Ridgeland Avenue and Adams Street. About five dealers will be on hand to sell and buy coins, and club members will conduct a coin auction.